



News Release

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Bug repellant is a must for those end of summer outdoor outings

Mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus found in five Washington counties

OLYMPIA — As people head outside to enjoy Labor Day Weekend, the Department of Health urges everyone to avoid West Nile virus by protecting themselves from mosquito bites.

Mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus have been found in Yakima, Spokane, Grant, Franklin, and Benton counties this year.

Although there have been no reports of human cases acquired in our state this year, it's important to be aware that the virus is here and can cause very serious illnesses.

Most people bitten by a mosquito carrying the virus won't get sick. Some people will develop mild symptoms including headache and fever that go away without treatment. However, West Nile virus infection can be very serious and even fatal. Severe disease can include meningitis or encephalitis, and some neurological effects of the disease may be permanent. People over 50 and those with weak immune systems are at higher risk for serious illness.

It's important to avoid mosquito bites to prevent infection. The best strategy is to wear pants and long sleeve shirts and use bug repellant when outdoors during times when mosquitoes are active. It's important to carefully follow the instructions on the repellent label — especially when using repellent on children. The strength of the repellent and the application method may be different.

Tracking and monitoring shows that most West Nile virus is found in south Central Washington. Liz Dykstra, public health entomologist for the Department of Health, says the combination of warm weather and standing water created by irrigation, along with trees and other vegetation, provides ideal habitat for mosquitoes and birds that carry the virus. Updated [West Nile virus information](#), prevention tips, and [testing information](#) are available online.

West Nile virus prevention

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